

the exact idea which each technical term has been defined to signify; else the whole train of words is mere sound and inanity. But in religion, a man has a feeling of having some general ideas connected with all the words as he hears them, though he perhaps never studied, or does not retain the definition of one. I shall have occasion to repeat this remark, and therefore do not enlarge here. The inference is the same as under the former observation ; it is, that the technical terms of Christianity will contribute little to precision of thought, unless the ideas which they signify be often expressed at length in other words, either in explanation of those terms when introduced, or in substitution for them when omitted.

Thirdly, it is not in the power of single theological terms, however precise their definitions may at any time have been, to secure to their respective ideas an unalterable stability. Unless the ideas themselves, by being often expressed in common words, preserve the signification of the terms, the terms will not preserve the accuracy of the ideas. This is true no doubt of the technical terms of science ; but it is true in a much more striking manner of the peculiar words in theology. If the technical terms of science, at least of the strictest kind of science, were to cease to mean what they had been defined to mean, they would cease to mean anything, and the change would be only from knowledge to blank ignorance. But in the Christian theology, the change might be from truth to error; since the peculiar words might cease to mean what they were once defined to mean, by being employed in a different sense. It may not be difficult to conjecture in what sense the terms conversion and regeneration, for example, were used by the reformers, and the men who may be called the fathers of the established church of this country; but what sense have they subsequently borne in the writings of many of its divines ? The peculiar words may remain, when the ideas which they were intended to perpetuate are gone. Thus instead of being the signs of those ideas, they become their monuments ; and monuments profaned into abodes for the living enemies of the departed. It must indeed be acknowledged, that in some instances innovations of doctrine have been introduced partly by declining the use of the words that

designated the doctrines which it was
wished to render obsolete*